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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 004079

SIPDIS

LONDON FOR S/SRAP JARRETT BLANC

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: LONDON CONFERENCE ON AFGHANISTAN - EMBASSY KABUL  
VIEWS

Classified By: Ambassador F. Ricciardone, Reason 1.4(b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: In view of the Washington and London planning meetings on the London conference, following are Embassy Kabul's thoughts on six key U.S. policy guidelines for the conference. End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) First, we recommend a return to the security focus as the most appropriate one for a meeting in this context and timeframe, for the following reasons:

-- governance and economic reconstruction messages are most resonant within Afghanistan, with the key audience we wish to influence being Afghans who should expect a better standard of service delivery and rule of law from their new Administration. These themes should be kept at an aspirational level in London while being more deeply explored at the upcoming Kabul conference in the Spring; and

-- with a one-day event, a discussion of security will be shortchanged if the agenda is too diffuse. The need is urgent to have security issues, including troop contributions, discussed in detail.

[¶3.](#) (C) Secondly, Embassy Kabul urges that we press the UK to give greater prominence to the future Kabul conference than appears to be their intent. The London Conference is unlikely to make a deep impression in Afghanistan, and will not be seen as an Afghan-led process. We want to keep the Karzai government focused on its responsibilities to show progress on the inauguration 'compact' to its own constituents, in the short term. We further recommend that the U.S. draw a line on any other donor nation offering a venue for another conference before the Kabul conference can be put firmly on the calendar.

[¶4.](#) (C) Third, on other security issues, we are not yet convinced that a detailed TLSR plan setting out objective criteria -- including development and governance elements -- will be completed by the time of the London Conference. To avoid a push for some troop-contributing nations to prematurely declare successful TLSR in order to remove their troops from Afghanistan, we must be certain that these objective criteria are first fully developed and met. Consequently, any agreement on a TLSR program in London would be premature absent this consensus among ISAF, relevant nations and GIROA. That said, even absent consensus, it could be useful for conference participants to reaffirm international community intentions to support efforts to build the ANSF capacity, contribute to development and governance, and, in conjunction with GIROA, to publicly emphasize their collective commitment to transfer full responsibility and ownership of Afghanistan's security to GIROA as soon as possible

[¶5.](#) (C) Fourth, it is vitally important that any announcement concerning a new reintegration program or Commission be made

first by the GIROA, in Afghanistan, to reinforce the notion that the program is both Afghan-designed and Afghan-led. Absent any such announcement prior to the London Conference, the international community should refrain from focusing on reintegration and reconciliation other than generally stating that it looks forward to finding ways to support GIROA efforts as articulated in President Karzai's inauguration speech.

¶6. (C) Fifth, on elections, we view the London conference as a good opportunity for the GIROA and international donors to agree on minimum conditions for the conduct of Parliamentary and District Council elections, but not/not necessarily the moment to announce a date for the elections. Getting an international position on our conditions for support to future elections will be a difficult and vital first step -- since the most important element of this is getting Karzai to overcome his belief that the Independent Electoral Commission was not complicit in fraud and needs reform.

¶7. (C) Sixth and finally, the conference should avoid setting concrete governance and economic benchmarks. Rather, the conference declaration should include aspirational language in these areas. This will allow London to build momentum towards an Afghan-led process with donors over the coming months that will set agreed-upon economic and governance (including anti-corruption) goals and benchmarks for the Kabul conference in the spring. In London, we should also highlight Afghan priorities coming out of the January 20 Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting in Kabul. We should encourage donors to consider debt relief for Afghanistan if it has reached the World Bank,s Heavily

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Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) completion point, if not, the Conference could welcome the preparatory steps taken to date.

The Conference can similarly praise the Af-Pak Transit Trade Agreement if it has been initialed; if not we should leverage the Conference to urge conclusion of the agreement.

RICCIARDONE